St Paul's
C of E Primary School

A place to belong

School Dog

Headteacher:	**Christie Clarke**
Member of Staff Responsible:	**Christie Clarke**
Reviewing Committee:	**H&S Governor**
Effective Date of Use:	**19th September 2025**
Term of Next Review:	**Autumn 2026**
Non Statutory Policy	

St Paul's C of E Primary School

A Place to Belong

Our Christian Vision

Our school is a family where everyone feels safe, happy and valued, and is supported to achieve their full potential.

We will develop compassionate and caring individuals who depend on one another, are highly motivated, and have a life-long love of learning in preparation for the future.

Our Core Values

All that we do is underpinned by the core Christian values of *Family (Koinonia), Compassion, Perseverance and Forgiveness*

"Though we are many, we form one body, all joined together as members of the whole. We each have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. We must use them wisely."

Romans 12:5-8

School Dog Policy

Introduction

Children and adults can benefit educationally and emotionally, increase their understanding of responsibility and develop empathy and nurturing skills, through contact with a suitable, calm dog.

In addition to these benefits, children and adults take great enjoyment from interaction with animals. Any dog in our school will be well cared for and responsibly owned.

The dog's suitability to have contact with children will be risk assessed on a regular basis.

Is there a risk in bringing a dog into a school environment?

It is impossible to eliminate all risk in school. This policy shows that we have thought carefully about school life with a dog and how, through careful management, there is a very low risk of harm.

Our risk assessment is reviewed annually but if necessary will be reviewed on a more regular basis.

Roles and Responsibilities

The governing body has a responsibility to ensure that the school has a written policy for dogs in school. The Headteacher is responsible for implementing this policy. The governors have agreed this policy and signed it off.

Teachers, staff, pupils, parents and visitors are required to abide by this policy. The curriculum will support learning about dogs and how best to behave around our dog. This will include highlighting that not all dogs are well trained and that caution must be used around unknown dogs outside school.

Reasons to have a dog in School

In Summary academic research has shown that dogs working and helping in the school environment:

- benefit children's social and emotional development
- have a calming effect on pupils, particularly those with behavioural or learning difficulties
- improve behaviour and concentration, reduce stress and improve self-esteem
- encourage expression and participation in more withdrawn children
- foster a sense of responsibility
- motivate pupils to think and to learn, as children have a high level of natural interest in, enthusiasm for and enjoyment of animals
- encourage respect and thereby improve pupils' relationships with each other, parents and teachers
- teach children to nurture and to have respect for life

- help children build confidence in reading
- reduce children's anxieties if they have a fear of dogs
- improve attendance

Examples of how our school dog will support wellbeing:

Dogs will be gentle and loving, but at the same time full of fun and enjoyment for the students. Those students who work with the dog may be for support for their self-esteem or wellbeing. The dog will also work with small reading groups to allow children to build confidence in reading. Once the dog has been integrated, other working groups may be implemented. Some children may be able to spend time during lunch or break to interact with the dog.

For wellbeing, walking, grooming, playing and training are some of the responsibilities students will be allowed to undertake. It has been proved that working and playing with a dog improves children's social skills and self-esteem.

Wellbeing dogs can work with students on a one-one basis and will especially help those students who have been or are going through upsetting/difficult times or even scared/phobic of dogs. The dog will bring much joy and help to all the students they meet and are happy to provide plenty of hugs to the students they are spending time with. Students who struggle with social interaction can find a reassuring friend in a dog.

School Policy

- The dog will be paid for and owned by Mrs Clarke.
- The dog will receive general training.
- The governors have the right to refuse entry on site to the dog.
- Only the school dog is allowed on the premises.
- All other dogs must not come on site unless they are a known therapy or assistance dog and the Headteacher has been informed beforehand and has approved this visit.
- The dog is a Cockapoo, chosen because it is an intelligent breed that will respond well to training and which is known to be good with children, sheds little hair and is very sociable and friendly.
- The Chairs of Governors and the Headteacher agree that a school dog will benefit the children and staff.
- Staff, parents and children have been informed by letter that a dog will be in school.
- Children, staff and visitors known to have allergic reactions to dogs may choose not to have physical contact with the dog.
- All visitors will be informed on arrival that there is a dog in school.
- If the dog is ill it will not be allowed into school.
- The dog will be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk and will be under the full control and supervision of an adult.
- Children must never be left alone with the dog and there must be appropriate adult supervision at all times.
- Children should be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog.
- Children should remain calm around the dog and will be supported to do so.
- Children should not put their face near a dog and should always approach it standing up.

- Children should never go near or disturb the dog that is sleeping or eating.
- Children must not be allowed to play roughly with the dog.
- Everyone must wait until the dog is sitting or lying down before touching or stroking.
- If the dog is surrounded by a large number of children, the dog could become nervous agitated. Therefore, the adult in charge of the dog must ensure that they monitor and remove the dog if appropriate.
- Dogs express their feelings through their body language. Growling or bearing of teeth indicate that the dog is feeling angry or threatened. Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous. If the dog is displaying any of these warning signs it should be immediately removed from that particular situation or environment.
- Children should not eat close to the dog. The dog should not be in the dinner hall around lunchtime and will never be in a food preparation place such as the kitchen.
- Children should be careful to stroke the dog on the body, chest or back and not by the face or top of head.
- Children should always wash their hands after handling a dog.
- Any dog foul should be cleaned up immediately by an adult and disposed of appropriately.
- Parents will be informed that they may choose not to permit their children to have access to the dog.
- Appropriately trained staff will maintain records and anecdotal evidence of the work and impact of the school dog.
- SLT will know the whereabouts of the dog and which staff are supervising at all times.
- The dog will be included in the fire evacuation procedure under the supervision of the SLT and be signed in as a member of staff.
- If someone reports having an issue with the dog, this information must be passed to the Headteacher or SLT Team as soon as possible.
- All concerns will be responded to by the Headteacher.
- Public liability insurance has been purchased to cover the dog in school.

Day-to-day Management

The dog will:

- Not be allowed in school if it is unwell.
- Be kept on a lead when moving between classrooms or on a walk.
- Be under the full control and supervision of an adult at all times.
- Have a quiet area available for resting.
- Be fully trained to a dog bed if it is going to be on site for a prolonged period.
- Have had all injections.
- Be signed into school as a staff member in case of a fire.

Our pupils will:

- Never have sole responsibility for, or be left alone with, the dog.
- Meet the dog in a group of no more than six children, following ‘approach, ask, pet, goodbye’.

- Be reminded of what is appropriate behaviour around the dog every time they meet her.
- Always remain calm.
- Be gentle.
- Not put their face near the dog's.
- Not disturb the dog when it is eating or sleeping.
- Always approach the dog standing up.
- Not feed the dog anything other than food/treats agreed with an adult.

The pupils and adults will also learn about how dogs express their feelings through their body language:

- Growling or baring of teeth indicates that the dog feels threatened or angry.
- Flattened ears, tail lowered or between their legs, hiding behind their owner, whining or growling are signs that the dog is frightened or nervous.

If the dog is displaying any of these signs, it should immediately be removed from that particular situation or environment.

Health and Safety Principles

Children and adults will always wash their hands or use hand-gel after handling the dog. Any dog foul will be cleared up immediately and disposed of appropriately by the adult in charge of the dog at the time. Children will never do this.

Should a bite occur (even playfully):

1. Parents will be contacted immediately.

2. The wound will be cleaned and covered with a sterile, non-sticky dressing.

3. The child/adult will be released for medical attention.

4. All staff will be informed.

5. A full investigation will take place.

6. The suitability of having a dog in school will be reassessed by the Headteacher/Chair of Governors.

Health Checks

The dog will attend two health checks a year and this will be financed by Miss C Waite.

The dog will not attend the school site if it is unwell or needs any medical treatment.

Its owner will be responsible for its day to day care and ensuring that all vaccinations, flea and worm treatments are up-to-date.

Its owner will have trained the dog and will maintain high expectations of its behaviour.

Insurance

The insurance for the school has been checked and is subject to a risk assessment.

The dog will also have its own insurance including liability insurance. Copies will be kept in the school office.

FAQ:

Q- Who is the legal owner of the dog and who pays for its costs?

A- The legal owner of the dog will be Mrs Clarke; who will bear the costs associated with owning the dog.

Q- Is the dog from a reputable breeder?

A- Yes. The dog has been specifically chosen for its temperament.

Q- Will the dog be a distraction?

A- The dog will be kept in the office areas and in a dog bed. The office is separate from the classrooms / playground area to ensure it only comes into contact with children who are happy to have contact and have parental permission for this, under strict supervision.

Q- Has a risk assessment been undertaken?

A- Yes, we have carefully considered having a dog in school and sought advice from many sources, including other schools and the dogs trust that have successfully had a school dog.

Q- Who is responsible for training?

A- Mrs Clarke will be the legal owner of the dog and as a result, will be responsible for her training. Appropriate professional training is obtained and the dog will work towards being trained as a therapy dog.

Q- How will the dog be toileted to ensure hygiene for all?

A- In the interest of health and hygiene our school dog will be toileted when taken out for short walks, away from the school. Only staff members will clear this away appropriately leaving no trace on the ground and cleaning the area with disinfectant if needed. Our policy of no other dogs in the playground is still applicable as we are unable to put effective control measures in place that guarantee temperament and safety when children come into unsupervised contact with unknown dogs.

Q- How will the dog's welfare be considered?

A- The dog will be walked regularly and given free time outside. Parents will be able to give permission in advance to allow their child to be able to walk with a member of staff and the dog during that time. The dog will be kept in the SLT office and will only have planned and supervised contact with children and visitors. The dog will be carefully trained over a period of time and will have unlimited access to water. We will work carefully to ensure the dog's welfare is always considered.

Q- How will this be managed where children have allergies?

A- Children will not need to touch the dog or be near the dog, which will relieve the possibility of allergic reactions. This Cockapoo was chosen because they are known to malt infrequently, therefore produce less dander.

Q- My child is frightened of dogs; how will you manage this?

A- Any access to the dog is carefully managed and supervised and children do not need to have close contact with it unless permission for this has been given. We hope to work closely with parents of children who are fearful of dogs to alleviate their fear and to teach them how to manage this.